

## Meeting Summary

### SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY COUNCIL

Chair: Dr. Robert Kavlock, Interim Science Advisor

Monday, June 23, 2014

2:30 – 4:30 p.m. EDT

**STPC Members and Presenters:** Robert Kavlock (EPA Interim Science Advisor, Chair), Khesha Reed (OCHP), Al McGartland (AO-OP), Chris Zarba (SABSO), Betsy Shaw (OAR), Nanci Gelb (OARM), David Bloom (OCFO), Louise Wise (OCSPP), Monica Jones (for Jim Woolford, OEI), Tracy Sheppard (for Kevin Minoli, OGC), Fred Hauchman (ORD), Barry Breen (OSWER), Ed Ohanian (for Michael Shapiro, OW), Robert Maxfield (Region 1), Kevin Kubik (for George Pavlou, Region 2), Ron Landy (for William Early, Region 3), Thomas Baugh (for Ann Heard, Region 4), Carole Braverman (for Bharat Mathur, Region 5), Jeff Robichaud (for Mark Hague, Region 7), Howard Cantor (Region 8), Brenda Bettencourt (Region 9), Michelle Pirzadeh (Region 10).

Additional Presenters: Mary Greene (OSA) on CRA Policy; Virginia Houk (ORD) and Anand Mudambi (OSA) on the Peer Review Handbook revision; Lara Phelps (OSA) on the Council for Regulatory Environmental Modeling (CREM) and the Forum on Environmental Measurements (FEM).

#### Introductory Remarks:

Dr. Robert Kavlock welcomed the Science and Technology Policy Council (STPC) members and asked Anand Mudambi (OSA) to conduct the roll call. Dr. Kavlock made several announcements:

- The EPA nominee to be Assistant Administrator for ORD, Dr. Thomas Burke, awaits Senate confirmation and would take over chairing the STPC as the EPA Science Advisor if he is confirmed.
- Dr. Kavlock and his staff are interviewing STPC members and STPC Steering Committee members and have collected valuable information and feedback on the focus and activities of the STPC—a process that will continue.
- ORD's Rita Schoeny will serve as the interim chair of the Risk Assessment Forum (RAF) during the search process for a new chair.
- Virginia Houk (ORD) expects the revised Peer Review Handbook to be released for concurrence in mid-July with comments due by August 29, 2014.
- Mary Greene (OSA) and her staff are responding to the helpful comments provided by STPC members on the draft Cumulative Risk Assessment (CRA) policy. Part of their response will address comments outside the specifics of the definition and will include offering a series of state-of-the-science and technical webinars to broaden

outreach. Further comments are due to the STPC Steering Committee by July 15, 2014. The policy will come back to the STPC before finalization.

## **1. STPC/National Research Council (NRC) Risk Assessment Reports Workgroup: Final Recommendations for the STPC**

### **Highlights:**

Workgroup co-chairs Ed Ohanian (OW) and Al McGartland (AO-OP) reported that the workgroup has finalized a priority list of initiatives in response to NRC report recommendations to the Agency, including such challenging topics as developing a unified approach to cancer and noncancer dose response data. Of a pool of 78 recommendations, 19 RAF initiatives were deemed high priority and ongoing, six proposals for new initiatives are near-term in scope and five are long-term. The co-chairs also provided estimates for the amount of contractor resources and EPA staff time that may be involved for the programs and regions to consider. Betsy Shaw (OAR) noted that operationalizing the initiatives and deciding what order to pursue them and fund them is the next task before the STPC. Nanci Gelb (OARM) asked about how the “capacity-building and succession planning” initiative might be funded and discussants noted that the “EPA University” project, currently in its infancy, might be appropriate. Barry Breen (OSWER) thanked the co-chairs for the excellent report but suggested that the estimated hours and resources might be optimistically low. Ed Ohanian noted that the RAF is not in a position to absorb more work and the co-chairs are requesting input and resources from the programs so that EPA can remain credible when queried by stakeholders about its response to NRC science recommendations. Dr. Kavlock recommended that a subgroup of the RAF workgroup provide ongoing oversight of this next phase.

### **Action Item:**

- A ballot will be issued soon for STPC members to express: 1) agreement or disagreement with each of the NRC Workgroup’s top priority risk reform initiatives; 2) commitments of Program Office or Regional resources; and 3) any worthy reform initiatives not elevated to the “priority” list by the NRC workgroup.

## **2. RAF Activities Update**

### **Highlights:**

Ed Ohanian (RAF chair) noted that a new RAF “purple book” entitled “Framework for Human Health Risk Assessment” has been released. The RAF also is poised for public release of a document on data-derived uncertainty factors with intraspecies extrapolation with STPC concurrence requested by July 11, 2014. The RAF also will be requesting that several senior managers volunteer to serve on a panel sometime between September 9-11, 2014, to share their needs about addressing uncertainty and variability in decision-making. The RAF Ecological Risk Assessment (ERA) Oversight Committee is focused on communications about ERA before decision-

making and incorporating ecosystem services into ERAs. Finally, nominations are sought to staff two new RAF technical panels being formed, as two existing panels complete their work and are retired.

**Action Items:**

- STPC concurrence is requested for the public release of the RAF Data-Derived Uncertainty Factors document by July 11, 2014. Default concurrence will be assumed if no comments are submitted by that date.
- Please forward nominations for following two new RAF technical panels: a. *Use of Weight of Evidence for Ecological Risk Assessment* and b. *Use of Outcome Assessment with Management Review*) by Wednesday July 16, 2014 to Lawrence Martin ([martin.lawrence@epa.gov](mailto:martin.lawrence@epa.gov)).

### **3. The Future of Environmental Modeling**

**Highlights:**

Howard Cantor (Region 8) noted that despite some issues regarding the functioning the Council for Regulatory Environmental Modelling (CREM), a recent poll of EPA staff showed overwhelming support for the need for some type of body to facilitate Agency modeling. A subgroup is developing a proposal for STPC review for the best type of body to serve the Agency in this regard. Three STPC member volunteers are sought to advise the proposal subgroup.

**Action Item:**

- Three STPC volunteers are sought to advise a subgroup of the CREM once they develop a proposal for modifying the CREM or creating another modeling organization that will best serve the Agency. Please indicate your interest by Friday, June 27, 2014, to [cantor.howard@epa.gov](mailto:cantor.howard@epa.gov) or [phelps.lara@epa.gov](mailto:phelps.lara@epa.gov).

### **4. Forum on Environmental Measurements (FEM)**

**Highlights:**

Lara Phelps (OSA) and others on the FEM have been actively engaged with the Agency measurement and monitoring community to facilitate rigorous approaches and prevent unintentionally divergent methods from emerging across Agency Program Offices and Regions. FEM officials are engaged with specialists involved in developing cutting-edge air and water sensors as well as the advanced monitoring initiative. A subgroup of the FEM would like to consistently engage with the Science Advisory Board (SAB) going forward and the STPC approved doing so by voice vote. The FEM also is seeking STPC support to guide the EPA measurement and monitoring community over the next decade.

## 5. Laboratory Enterprise Workgroup

Michelle Pirzadeh (Region 10), Nanci Gelb (OARM), Ramona Trovato (ORD) and others continue to facilitate the contractor-led laboratory enterprise portfolio review of laboratory efficiency that is nearing finalization. In addition, the National Academy of Sciences' evaluation of effectiveness is due at the end of August 2014 and has included five public meetings. The EPA Deputy Administrator has been briefed twice and a further meeting is being planned, which could impact the FY16 budget planning process. The contractor is "benchmarking" EPA facility costs and comparing them with other similar laboratories. One data call will be forthcoming for laboratory facility, human resources and operating costs information for 2013 and 2014.

## 6. Old and New Business

- Chris Zarba (SABSO) noted that important cross-cutting topics with long-term implications may not be addressed within the current issue selection process for the SAB. He proposed that the chartered SAB interact with National Program Directors to elicit new cross-cutting topics beyond the annual "call letter" that goes out for SAB review requests. He noted that hydrofracking and chemical reviews will be a focus in the next year, but that this new process may allow the SAB to contribute beyond focusing on the scientific background of efforts that appear in the annual regulatory plan for the Agency.
  - **Action Item:** The chartered SAB is considering a new process for nominating strategic topics for SAB focus in collaboration with National Program Directors. Details on the proposal will be forthcoming from Anand Mudambi and comments are welcome and should be sent to: [zarba.chris@epa.gov](mailto:zarba.chris@epa.gov)
- Fred Hauchman (ORD) requested comments from the STPC on a proposal from the National Research Council entitled "Transforming Human-Health Risk Assessment with 21<sup>st</sup> Century Science". ORD's Chemical Safety for Sustainability (CSS) program and other agencies (e.g., NIEHS) have requested this evaluation from the NRC to see how the results of computational toxicology can be folded into risk based evaluations. Discussants noted that such a study may help build a constituency outside the Agency for the use of computational toxicology results in Agency processes, given the rapid development of this field.
  - **Action Item:** STPC comments on the proposal from the NRC are requested by July 16, 2014. Please forward input to [hauchman.fred@epa.gov](mailto:hauchman.fred@epa.gov).
- **Action Item:** To assist EPA in complying with a March 20, 2014, Office of Science and Technology Policy mandate requiring all agencies to have a scientific collections policy, please contact Greg Susanke (OSA) if your office maintains physical scientific collections through time (such as a 30-year repository of soil samples). All agencies have been requested to provide a

draft policy in September 2014. A request for participation in a workgroup to develop the policy will be sent by OSA Staff to the STPC Steering Committee shortly.

## **7. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m. The next STPC meeting is scheduled for September 2014, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.